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The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
14th Street & Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman,

I am writing you to request justification from the USDA for its recent cost-benefit analysis regarding implementation of Country of Origin Labeling (COOL).

It is inconceivable to me that the USDA would find zero benefits in empowering American consumers with the knowledge about whether they are buying American farm products. I also find it inconceivable that the USDA has developed such an obviously inflated \$3.9 billion cost figure to implement the program. That said, I have two requests from USDA.

First, I would like to see documentation for the \$3.9 billion cost estimate your agency issued. Please provide the analysis and data you used to reach this conclusion. I am skeptical to put it mildly.

Second, the claim that there will be no benefit from this labeling because it will make no difference to consumers whether the meat they buy is produced in the U.S. or a foreign country is flat out wrong. The USDA needs to go back and redo this part of the analysis. American farmers and ranchers produce the highest quality, best tasting, safest meat products in the world. Consumers know that; if empowered with country of origin information they will overwhelmingly choose U.S. meat products. That will result in additional sales and more economic benefit for American family farmers and ranchers.

The USDA ought to be the first to know those facts. If those who did this analysis don't know that U.S. consumers will choose American meat products over foreign meat products, and that facilitating that choice with information is an appropriate mission for the USDA, then there is a serious problem at USDA.

I look forward to receiving a justification for your cost estimate figures, and your real-world analysis of what the benefit to American farmers and ranchers will be from empowering consumers with information about which country produced the meat on their dinner table.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senate